



## HEALTH AND HYGIENE AMONG KUNABI OF UTTARA KANNADA DISTRICT IN KARNATAKA STATE

**Dr. M. P. Sobarad** Principal, A.G. College, Munavalli

**ABSTRACT** Health is common theme in most culture. In fact all communities have their own concept of health as a part of their culture. A proverb says Health is wealth and it seems to hold good that if a person health is good he can do more work and achieve everything in life. Health is the "Bioscience of Disease". In some culture health and harmony are considered as equivalent. Harmony is defined as being at peace with the soul of community god and cosmos. Health is most precise in any society and prevention of ill health and restoration of good health are main goals of the society. Health is a state of mental, physical well-being and free from disease. The present study involves the Kunabi community of Uttara Kannada district, Karnataka. The total population of this community is 11291 and distributed in Uttara Kannada District. The present study focuses on Health and Hygiene among Kunabi community.

**KEYWORDS :** Kunabi, Culture, Health, Hygiene, Community and Uttara Kannada

### INTRODUCTION

The term health usually means positive state of well-being in which the mind and body function to their fullest capacity. World Health Organization (WHO) defines health as a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease. Health is a pre-requisite for economic and social advance.

The study of health and hygiene among Kunabi of Uttara Kannada District aims to understand the concept of health and hygiene among different villagers of the district. Good health is a valuable asset to man and it is a great treasure. For any society its individual health is very essential, and for healthy individuals adequate sanitary specializations are equally important.

Public health services in societies are devoted to the protection and improvement of the health of the entire population. The main object is prevention of diseases and elimination of environmental health hazards. Public health depends on sanitation services, control of epidemics, sanitary disposal and the protection of water supply and food.

Generally people considered that, from health point of view village life is better than city life to some extent. Present study has made through the observation technique on Kunabi communities, supernatural beliefs and the diseases in order to understand health and hygiene. The scope of the study also includes the recording of the various types of diseases and methods of treatment used in curing them. It also includes the attitude of people towards different type of medicines.

Life is not merely living, but living in good health, health is not obscene of illness with a capacity for continuous intellectual and spiritual growth. It is a process of knowing, living, participating and being useful to the society.

In order to understand health and hygiene practices of the overall condition of Kunabi of Uttara Kannada District, house types, sanitary habits, food habits, work and leisure practices and the level of their understanding of the concept of health and hygiene is covered.

Sociological studies consider the health and hygiene practices have relevant socio-economic and culture basis for their evolution in any social structure support for many sociological concepts can be obtained by understanding health hygiene practices in a society.

Health ramifications are important factors which effect cultural practices found in the human groups in particular environment. Epidemiology is essentially devoted to selective distribution of diseases and is both descriptive and analytical. Since it is concerned with the origin and sources of diseases rather than with its distribution alone, it can be considered as branch of ecology, as the ecology of diseases and as a medical ecology. The epidemiology deals with the relationship between behavior of human groups and their physical and biotic environments. Social and cultural distinctions associated with differences in age, sex, occupation, class, ethnicity, and community, can have significant effects on epidemiological phenomena.

It was found that, Kunabi rarely seek the help of modern medicine for minor complaints like cough, cold and common fever etc. For these

ailments, remedies are given in the home by elderly persons who possess rich experience in life. In case of major complaints, they seek the help from the PHC doctors in the village or private doctors and in case if they decide to take patients to Government or Private Hospitals in the city.

### MATERIAL AND METHODS

The method used in this study of health and hygiene condition of Kunabi is ethnographic and descriptive. The sociological tools such as censuses, observation, interview and case study methods are used in collecting data. The study is restricted to health, hygiene, diseases and their cure only. Both traditional and modern methods of medicines and cure have been included in the study viz.

### KUNABI

Kunabi have their settlements in the Karnataka; extend from North of Karnataka to the Mandavi River to the west of Sharavati and up to the Sahyadri hill of the west and valleys of these areas. They speak Konkani and because of this they are also called Konkani Kunabis. Kannada speaking Kunabi are referred to as Kaanadee Kunabis as per the old Maharashtra Gazetteer.

### Health and Hygiene

The concept of health and hygiene varies from society to society. Both health and hygiene play a vital role in the socio-cultural and economic functioning of a society. Spread of communicable diseases is directly related to personal and also to community hygiene. Under the village condition with agricultural activities it would be very difficult to maintain higher level of hygiene. However people constantly try to avoid diseases by following certain social restriction for certain activities which have support of beliefs. In order to understand the health and hygiene practices of the Kunabi, observation of their work, and leisure sanitary habits, toilet specialization, food habits, house types, personal cleanliness has to be attended.

Health can be explained as the state of dynamic equilibrium between organism and its environment in which all functions of mind and body are normal. The state of being healthy is a real enjoyment. Without a healthy and sound body we cannot have sound health. No employer would like to keep a sick persona for any job. Health from all points of view is very important.

### Food Habits

Kunabi people are both vegetarian and non-vegetarian. Their daily food is vegetarian and in festivals, functions, and on arrival of guests or once in a week, they prepare non-vegetarian food, which includes fish, chicken, mutton etc. Vegetarian food includes jowar roti, rice, ragimuddi (meals) wheat roti etc. The food pattern varies from area to area. For instance, in North Karnataka it is Jowar Roti' whereas in old Mysore area it is 'Ragi Muddi'. This variation in food habits is due to change in climatic condition.

Generally, people take tea in the morning at the breakfast which usually consists of uppittu (Upama), avalakki (Pova), chitranna (coloured rice). Farmers working in fields take meals in afternoon also because of their hard work.

It was observed that men and women of Kunabi are habituated to taking alcoholic drinks and smoking. There is a government liquor shop, however most of the people use liquor prepared in the village. It is also very cheap compared to the government supply. Usually people consume illicit drinks in their own village. Since many of the preparation need very less time to prepare, usually items are prepared and consumed within short time. However some long lasting preparation like dry chili powder mix (Chatni), liquid green chilly mix (Kharindi) and pickles are prepared with due care with assistance of friendly neighbours. Here experience of old generation is passed to younger generation. Usually hygienic methods to prepare food items are shared by elders to younger one.

### House Types

Another important factor for healthy living is the cleanliness of the houses and their surroundings. The Government of India and Government of Karnataka have introduced for development scheme for scheduled caste and scheduled tribe, in which among the Ashraya Yojana Scheme and construction of houses of these communities is undertaken. Following are the major types of houses among Kunabi community have Thatched, Tiled, Mud, country tiled and R.C.C. houses (Ashraya Yojana Scheme houses).

Surrounding of houses, play a significant role in the health and hygiene. It was observed that villagers are least bothered about the cleanliness of the surrounding of their houses. The space around the houses of the agricultural people is used for collecting dung's and manure etc. There appears degree of variation among the clusters regarding the conditions of cleanliness.

It is interesting to note that, most of the Kunabi people have not constructed separate cattle shed, so cattle urine flows outside and stagnates. This form is suitable for flies, mosquitoes etc. as breeding places. It was observed that village Panchayat people are at least bothered about disposing the waste material, so that places have become sources of unhygienic condition of the village.

Cleanliness of the houses as a whole is swept at least once in a day in the morning. The hygienic condition of the huts are different to maintain since usually there is only one room, in that they store grains and also use for sleeping etc. A portion is used for kitchen no windows or holes are there, so that fresh air passes. Even if there are windows they keep it close from the fear of evil spirits and due to age old habits. Cleanliness of houses seems to depend on the family background and cultural practices. They spend the leisure time in repairing the houses and sometimes they engage in village festivals. Radio, Television sets are there in few houses friendly people visits there and people spend most of the leisure time in talking about various matters.

### TYPE OF DISEASES AND TREATMENT

Disease is organic when it affects the structure of the body and functional when there is no visible change in structure, but there is failure of any function in the body, when a contagious diseases occurs in a certain locality more or less constantly it is said to be endemic, when it affects a very large part of community from time to time only it is said to be epidemic when an epidemic spreads over large area of a continent it is called a pandemic and single stray cases of a contagious diseases in a given locality are spoken sporadic.

The most important fact about the primitive medicine is the way in which it is integrated into a whole or a paternal, the main strength of the preventive medicine lies in psychotherapy and the sanction that medicine man or a magician carried with him is the faith of entire community.

The diseases can be studied under several categories such as common hereditary, contagious, epidemic.

**Common Diseases:** The common diseases prevalent in the Kunabi community are fever, dysentery, cough and cold.

**Hereditary Diseases:** Hereditary diseases are those which are inherited from the parents. These are considered by the rural folk as the disease sent by the Gods for the sins of the victims not only in this life but also in their past birth. Asthma is the common hereditary disease observed among the Kunabi.

### Contagious Diseases:

The diseases, which spread from patient to others through physical

contact, are common cold, diarrhea, skin diseases, eye infection, chickenpox and cholera.

### Epidemic Diseases:

Epidemic diseases are usually believed to be sent by ancestors or Gods as a punishment for the evil deeds of man. It is believed that when Gods or ancestors are neglected or disrespected they become angry and stop their protective roles towards man and thus allow evil beings to come inside the living of the village and give troubles. The villagers under these conditions realize take vows to the deities and ancestors to get cure. Some epidemic diseases/which frequent mankind are chicken pox/plague and cholera.

### Cold:

The belief on the part of individual is to consider that cold comes from drinking water from different wells or places and due to cold weather and soaking by soaking.

This prevailing hygienic and health regard about cold back to many generations. By avoiding cold foods and cold people certainly avoid further population of bacteria, viruses probably dominated in those cold atmospheres. In the similar fashion there are many beliefs prevail among the Kunabi which to certain extent help to manage health and hygienic conditions. However, there are equally more cases of beliefs which cause further damage. Cold is a common disease in all seasons. This disease is found among people of all age groups.

### Headache (Talenovu):

There are two types of headache one is common headache without area restriction and other half headache (Ardatalenovu) restricted to specific part. Half headache is believed to result due to disturbances in blood supply to brain due to infection in the nose or ear. When a person gets fever his body temperature goes up. It is believed that the fever is caused due to shock, infection, cold, mental strain and so on. When a person gets fever there will be rise in his body temperature. Fever sometimes is also accompanied by running nose. The tongue loses its sensitivity. Treatment involves the use of mixture of little turmeric (arishina), cumin (jiragi), cardamom (yalakki) boiled in water for few minutes and then the decoction is consumed 3 to 4 times for five days. During the treatment patient should take rice and curries only.

### Ear Disease:

Usually ear gets boils on the external part and in canal. The symptoms are ear pain and sometimes puss or blood starts coming from the ear. The most popular treatment for this is thick leaves of Kanbandurali a parasitic plant which usually grows on mango tree is heated and juice is extracted and poured in the ear which is giving pain. The other most common treatment for ear pain is using coconut oil heated along with garlic.

**Diarrhea or Loose Motion:** The villagers think that this is due to indigestion and some disorder in the stomach the symptoms involve repeated loose motion. The local treatment for this disease is a mixture of lime juice and banana given to the patient at early morning or black tea and lime juice.

### Dysentery:

This is another of diarrhea which involves loose motion along with mucus discharge and sometimes blood also comes and there will be pain in stomach. The treatment for this is chakarni beru grounded in lemon juice paste is given for drink once or twice in the day if not recovered by home remedy then patient go to hospital.

### Measles (Gobbara):

Kunabi believe that if they fail to pray or worship Dyamavva/Durgavva and Chaudeshwari Goddess, their children will suffer from measles. Child is given massage of castor oil (oudal enni) followed by bath of hot water mixed with neem (bevu) juice. Every Tuesday and Friday they worship all goddesses in the village temples by offering groundnut oil to deities of gods and goddesses. During this time, solitary confinement is provided to the patient. Early immunization by measles vaccine has to be given at 9-12 months of age.

### Jaundice (Kamini):

Jaundice affects people of all age and sexes. However in pregnant women it is more common. Jaundice spreads due to dirty water. Mixture of castor (awdalar) leaf and Jaggery (bella) is consumed twice a day for one week. Naatioushadi is given on Thursday and Sunday.

During course of treatment the patient should avoid oily food and non-vegetarian foods. Patient should take jowar bread and sugar cane juice for one month. If patient fails to recover within one month they turn towards hospital in the town.

#### **Stomach Pain:**

Toby leaves along with salt are grinded and given for drinking for two days/the other treatment is using mixture of soda and lemon juice.

#### **Wound and Cut:**

Pepper powder and ghee mixed thoroughly and applied on the place of wound and cut.

#### **Leprosy:**

A chronic infection disease caused by muco-bacterium leprol, the disease presents on great variety of signs and symptoms, depending on what tissue of organ of the body is involved. Among the Kunabi the Naativaidhya give chalurga oil, prepared derived from this oil, used for external application and also for internal administration, and a type of paste prepared out of bile Karke (white grass) in lemon juice (Limberasa) and applied all over the body once in a day. Normally person and persons affected by leprosy will not be allowed to stay in the village.

#### **Paralysis:**

Naativaidhya starts his treatment for paralysis by administrating parrot blood to the patient. He prepares paste by herbs and apply it with oil and rub it to the parts which are paralysed. He also suggests that patient should not eat non-vegetarian food.

#### **Asthma:**

Asthma is respiratory disease found in all age groups. Mainly this disease occurs during the winter season. Decoction of bamboo (bidaru) leaf boiled 2 or 3 glass of water is consumed thrice a day for 5 months. Another medicine is the mixture of garlic (ballulli), honey coriander (havija) and pepper gum (menasinakaalu), ginger (shunti) and ocium sanctum (tulasi) leaf consumed daily during the night for 3 months. During this treatment patient should not eat oily food, cold food and should not drink cold Water. (Basavanagouda, 2004, p. 279-284).

#### **EVIL SPIRIT PROCESSION**

In modern societies many do not believe in evil spirit but in villages most of the people believe in them and also are scared for them. It is believed that usually evil spirit are located in old deserted houses old tamarind tree, old wells etc. and certain other places like burial grounds and cremation grounds.

It is believed that they appear on dark night in moon day (amavase). It is usually believed that these spirits attack people. Their victims generally are believed to be in a state of ritual impurity. A menstruating woman or women with just delivered child/a bride who is in pollution or a girl who is in puberty are the favourite targets of spirits. Villages believe that certain precautions protect them by spirit.

Usually certain diseases which fail to get cured by existing modern methods are considered as troubles due to evil spirit attacks. Most of the psychological diseases which need long term treatment are considered as attack of spirit due to failure in understanding the diseases or due to lack of time to have repeated consultations with doctors.

Once people believe that certain individual is possessed by evil spirit they seek the help of experts with treatment record of history. Such priests or experts are usually referred to as Ajja (old man). These experts are believed to have command on the strong gods and through the help of gods they are capable of restricting the spirits to their original abode. They are called as shamans.

#### **CONCLUSIONS**

Now-a-days there is little awakening of health and hygiene among these people. When they fall sick, they first go to quack or Naativaidhya. If they are not cured then they visit nearby Primary Health Centre (PHC), where treatment is free of cost. Normally for small ailments like cough and cold they visit Naativaidhya. If they visit mantravadi (witch doctor) they ask them to offer some animal to the evil spirit. It works out to be costly. For major illness they visit hospital. If treatment is of short period they stay there, otherwise they prefer to come back to their village. Admitting a patient to the big hospital

involves many procedures and problems. Therefore, villagers prefer to stay back in the village and die there. It involves many emotional factors.

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